

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



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Community has always been at the forefront of Sunshine Coast Lightning's core identity, and that remained a central focus heading into Season 4. Extensive planning and preparation had taken place with the view to grow and expand our community programs in 2020, with new partnerships, engagement opportunities and event ideas in the mix.

Lightning embraced their time in the community throughout pre-season, with visits to local netball associations, as well as refreshed school holiday clinics. A joint community bushfire fundraising event with Sunshine Coast Falcons and USC Thunder saw the Club continue to engage and undertake in philanthropic ventures, while we also strengthened our connection with our two charity partners in Confident Girls Foundation and The Compass Institute.

As our community programs built momentum – and on the eve of a new event with Compass taking place – the global COVID-19 pandemic took hold. The landscape immediately started changing, and at one-point Lightning's 2020 season and even the Club's future viability was called into question. All community programs were put on hold and lockdowns commenced across the country and the world.

For a Club that strongly values its community connections, Season 4 has certainly been challenging in more ways than one. The Club looked for new ways of engaging and keeping its Members, partners and fans informed during the lockdown period,

with Government and Netball Australia rules restricting personal interaction. The Community Plan was reviewed to seek out new ways of making meaningful connections – both digitally as well as in a COVID-19 safe environment for when restrictions began to ease.

Surprise (socially distanced) community visits were a highlight for select Members and ANZAC cookies were baked and delivered to War Veterans for ANZAC Day. At home netball and training content was produced to assist the community in keeping active during lockdown, and COVID safety messaging shared on our social channels. Our Charity Partners received extra digital coverage and we worked with Sunshine Coast Council to support a variety of their community programs.

We were grateful to the State Government for enabling the Suncorp Super Netball (SSN) Season to be hosted in Queensland in a hub environment, with matches primarily held at USC Stadium on the Sunshine Coast and Nissan Arena in Brisbane. Most pleasing to the Club, was the strong showcase of community spirit and support at all Lightning hosted games – whether home or away. In fact, the Sunshine Coast community came together to embrace the whole SSN Season and displayed support to all eight teams from around the nation.

Reduced spectator capacities didn't stop the fans being loud and proud – and the team most definitely heard and embraced the Lightning love, albeit from a distance.

For the first time, Lightning Members, partners and fans were also able to watch our annual end of year awards via live stream.



“Excellent job you do in representing the Sunshine Coast – you are brilliant ambassadors for the Sunshine Coast, netball and role models for young girls which is key in building confidence and self-esteem.”

SEASON 4 IN REVIEW

While COVID restrictions prevented face to face engagement with the team for most of the season, Lightning always had the community front of mind.

CHARITY PARTNERS

Lightning's valued partnerships with local disability charity, The Compass Institute (Compass), and national charity, The Confident Girls Foundation, both successfully continued in 2020.

Compass had several engagement opportunities throughout the year, many of which were captured via video and shared on the Club's digital channels. These activities included:

- Attending the bushfire fundraiser at Alexandra Headland and providing the BBQ in a branded activation space,
- Providing volunteers on game days to help with the fundraising recycling bins and handing out team posters – as well as exposure on the in-stadium big screen,
- Players assisting in fundraising efforts at Sunshine Plaza for Compass's assistance dogs program,
- Players visiting their two social enterprise cafes as part of our membership activities and delivering free Lightning branded coffee cups,
- A player attending their annual golf fundraising afternoon and being on the panel of speakers,
- Signed team netballs to use for Compass fundraising initiatives,
- The gifting of 10 supporter memberships,

- Players visiting their farm to undertake a Confident Girls Foundation activity, and
- Ticketing allocation for their young people with disabilities to attend our pre-season match, as well as all home games throughout the season.

“Today was amazing. To see that together we created some confident girls in the space of two hours was a real example of how our partnership works. Thank you for all that you do to make these things happen. Please keep me posted on future activities, would love to join you.”

The Confident Girls Foundation was executed a little differently to originally planned, however the program still provided meaningful exposure and impact. This included:

- Digital content and web articles produced and shared across Lightning's social media channels to promote events, activities and fundraising initiatives,
- Confident Girls content being shared in-stadium on the big screen at game days,
- Fundraising at our Members pre-season match where almost \$3,000 was gifted to the Foundation through a gold coin donation and auction of a Lightning signed ball and dress,
- Surprise visits to young Members, gifting Lightning created positive affirmation cards,
- Laura Scherian speaking at a high school future leaders induction day, as well as running a free clinic for a brand-new school-based netball team,

- Player visit to a high school with a specialised young mothers and babies educational pathway to participate in a yoga session followed by morning tea and Q&A with Lightning Ambassadors Laura Langman and Scherian,

- Supporting the Confident Girls Round with various activities including the team wearing Foundation shirts on broadcast for the warmup and supporting Laura Scherian and two teammates who participated in a post-match fundraising telethon,
- Providing game day ticketing to young girls in the region when the team played in Townsville,
- Running spike ball clinics for two different high school groups, and
- Engaging charity partner Compass with a coffee tutorial and taste test with Ambassadors Scherian and Langman.



COMMUNITY APPEARANCES AND ENGAGEMENTS

Lightning strongly values its interactions within the community and in just four seasons the Club has already cultivated a reputation for being approachable, inspirational and generous with their time. The Players along with the Coaches are extremely accessible and offer their time to attend a wide variety of appearances throughout the season, including during away trips.

While COVID impacted our ability to conduct face to face community visits and events, over 300 Club appearance hours were still completed across various commitments.

The appearances were varied and included community events as well as schools, netball associations, hospitals, charities, children's programs and media. In addition, Lightning partners have valued access to the players for affiliated community events such as community unveilings, national awareness campaigns (e.g. various International Women's Day and Children's Protection Week events) and televised telethons.

Lightning's 2019 Community Champion, Cara Koenen, helped support a range of Sunshine Coast Council activities including promoting their Australia Day Awards and participating in an online children's library e-reading. Lightning's Coaches also hosted a Return to Training Workshop in partnership with the Council targeted at community coaches on the Coast.

Feedback from appearances and engagements is always extremely positive, heartfelt and uplifting, particularly in a year that has seen such adversity and uncertainty.



“Thank you so much to Jacqui she was incredible.”



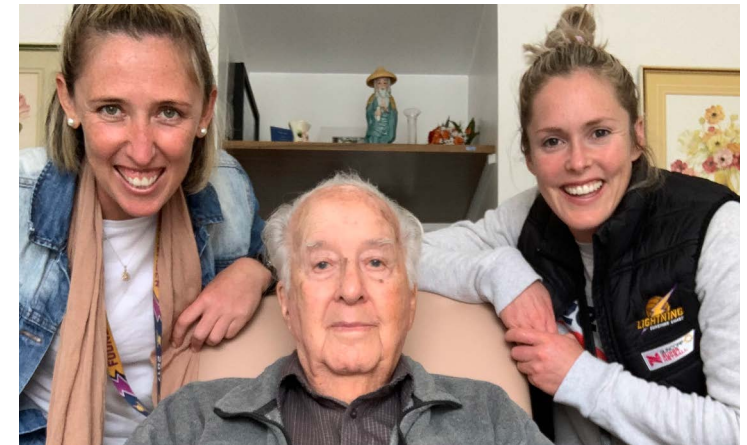
COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARD

The Club introduced a Community Champion Award as part of the end of year awards night in Season 3, and a player was again recognised in 2020 for selflessly giving back to the community and positively impacting those around them.

“My daughter loved the clinic hosted by Laura Scherian yesterday. Young netballers adore these Lightning players and when they give feedback like ‘great work today’ and ‘you have amazing footwork’ it brightens their whole day.”

Laura Scherian was crowned the 2020 winner, for her significant contribution, not only this year, but since the Club's inception as a foundation player.

Laura always goes above and beyond for the community. Despite challenges and restrictions, 2020 saw her enthusiastically participate in countless community driven activities, including surprise visits to Members during COVID, baking and delivering ANZAC cookies to war veterans and delivering Confident Girls Ambassador clinics, initiatives and events both on a national and local level. In particular, she formed a wonderful friendship with one of the local war veterans, in which she surprised him with a (socially distanced) visit on his 99th birthday during a time when so many were isolated.



GAME DAY CONNECTIONS

It was an emotional journey for many, navigating through the prospect of not having a 2020 season to the eventual Queensland hub format seeing 19 games played at USC Stadium. What made sharing our home venue with seven other teams so special was the feedback and comments about how loud, passionate and embracing our crowd and community were.

While the usual fan engagement activities weren't able to take place (such as the ball delivery and coin toss, the community corner or post-game signings), the Club's Members, fans, partners and volunteers still got behind the team and the sport 110%.

Lightning home games looked a little different in 2020, however the Club was able to provide some community engagement and activation opportunities while remaining COVID-compliant including:

- The Strike Zone – allowing limited Lightning and Netball Australia sponsors and partners to engage with patrons pre-game (COVID approved).
- Downer's Lightning Lounge – using local catering and beverage suppliers, as well as guest speakers from Lightning's community programs.
- Compass providing the game day recycling bins, enabling them to raise funds for their programs through 'Containers for Change'.
- A dedicated charity round highlighting Compass and the Confident Girls Foundation.



“I’d just like to say how much we appreciate all that you do for us, as we are also aware of how much else you have to do for the game.”

GAME DAY WORKFORCE

Another large community program is Lightning's game day workforce, made up of over 50 local volunteers who are extremely passionate and proud of the team.

These volunteers perform varied duties including bump in and out, ticket scanning, meet and greet, corporate hospitality, sports presentation, team hosting and ushering.

In particular, with the condensed season and 19 games played at USC Stadium (in stark contrast to the usual seven in-season home games), the volunteer workforce showcased their wonderful community spirit, assisting with not only Lightning home games, but all games held at USC, including mid-week, weekend and double header fixtures. One volunteer also made the trek to all our Brisbane games to ensure a friendly face was back of house, and the delivery of away games was seamless.

The workforce is an invaluable credit to Lightning and the broader community!



“Even though it’s not the result that we hoped for it certainly made me realise how loyal our fans are (including myself) and how loved our SCL Netball Team are. I have thoroughly enjoyed my fourth year as a volunteer and my fourth year as a Lightning Member.”

LUCY LIGHTNING

Unfortunately, Lucy Lightning, the Club's mascot, didn't get to as many appearances or any game days in Season 4 due to COVID restrictions. She was, however, back in action towards the end of the season, supporting USC Thunder's clinic programs. Lucy looks forward to making a comeback in Season 5!



QUEENSLAND MEN'S TEAM

The connection with the Queensland Men's netball team continued, with the men providing extra bodies and height when attending select training sessions and scheduled practice matches – offering a great environment for both teams to learn from each other.



REQUESTS

Lightning proudly donates items to not-for-profit organisations, fundraising groups and individuals including signed memorabilia and tickets. Special experiences and wishes have also been granted to groups and individuals in times of need; including closed training sessions, surprise meet and greets and guest speaking appearances.



SUNCOAST REGION NETBALL ASSOCIATIONS ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Lightning's engagement with the seven Suncoast Region Netball Associations was earmarked for change in the lead up to Season 4 with a new program partner identified to come on board. However, this changed with the onset of COVID and community programs subsequently being put on-hold.

Being one of Lightning's key community programs – all the Associations were still treated to visits from players, as well as a variety of video messages of support throughout the year, a signed team ball and the opportunity for tickets to the Members pre-season game and SSN finals at USC Stadium.

USC NETBALL ACADEMY AND USC THUNDER

The affiliation between Lightning, USC Thunder and the USC Netball Academy provides fantastic development opportunities for coaches, players and umpires in the region and allows the SSN Club to directly help strengthen local netball pathways.

The USC Netball Academy was this year managed by Lightning's Assistant Coach Christine Voge and assisted by player Jacqui Russell (Development Coach). The program was supported by other Lightning players and staff throughout the year, ranging from specialist coaching to performance analysis, nutrition, performance, psychology and physiotherapy.

The Academy saw Chris create and manage an online program for emerging athletes, coaches and umpires during COVID, return to netball clinics and on-court sessions, engagement with Thunder athletes, three full day workshops, an intensive coaches development program, opportunities for umpires at SSN games and run three junior clinics in conjunction with Thunder athletes and coaches.

Chris also worked with USC Thunder teams (Sapphire, Ruby, 18U, 16U) and coaches throughout the season with specialist training and coach mentoring.



SEASON 5 AND BEYOND

Community connections remain at the forefront of CEO Danielle Smith and Coach Kylee Byrne's agenda.

Lightning will continue to heavily engage in the netball community, with an on-going focus on assisting talented pathway athletes reach their potential. Lightning provides aspiring local athletes with a tangible and realistic pathway to an elite netball career on the Sunshine Coast, to study at USC and pursue their dreams under the watchful eye of Lightning's coaches.

We have seen the results of these programs already with Sunshine Coast local, Ashlee Unie, being promoted to the 2021 Lightning squad following her pathway as Captain of USC Thunder.

Lightning looks forward to welcoming not only Ashlee, but also new players Kate Shimmin and Mahalia Cassidy, and sharing all three with the community. The Club thanks and wishes its very best to fan favourites in Annika Lee-Jones, Jacqui Russell and Laura Langman, however knows the local community will adopt and embrace our new players with just as much Lightning love.

The Club is extremely proud of the community interactions it undertook in Season 4, despite the COVID restrictions.

With over 300 community hours accounted for, Lightning remained committed to the Sunshine Coast region, local associations, Club Charity Partners, its volunteer workforce and the wider netball fanbase.

Through the Queensland hub scenario, the Club also endeavoured to make every team, every athlete and opposition staff member feel supported while away from home.

In 2021 we're excited to explore new initiatives and engage with likeminded partners to create maximum exposure and impact in the community. Even if events and engagements are executed a little differently, we're looking forward to getting back out and about in Season 5 and aim to evolve and improve our portfolio of community programs even further.

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THANK YOU

Thank you for your ongoing support in 2020.

PRINCIPAL PARTNERS



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